DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 588 RC 019 558

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TITLE Academic Alliances, You Can Do It Too.
PUB DATE Mar 94
NOTE 7p.; In: Montgomery, Diane, Ed. Rural Partnerships: Working Together. Proceedings of the Annual National Conference of the American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES) (14th, Austin, Texas, March 23-26, 1994); see RC 019 557.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Faculty; *College School Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Humanities; Interprofessional Relationship; *Networks; Partnerships in Education; Professional Associations; *Professional Development; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS *Arkansas

ABSTRACT

Housed at Henderson State University, the Arkansas Network of Humanities Academic Alliances is a statewide network of school and college teachers in humanities disciplines who meet regularly to promote ongoing professional development and work toward common goals. The network seeks to strengthen humanities teaching at all educational levels, improve student learning in the humanities, foster local college-school relationships, support established humanities alliances, and assist the formation of emerging alliances. The project director conducts faculty surveys to build new alliances, especially among underrepresented or underserved populations; organizes workshops, conferences, and inservice; provides ongoing technical support; and fosters public awareness of humanities alliances through newsletters and public relations. Current alliances represent teachers and faculty in history, social studies, communications, English, reading, whole language, journalism, foreign languages, and geography. Steps that facilitate alliance formation are outlined, including the initial interest meeting; financial and technical support available from the statewide network; development of a steering committee and local leadership; continuing alliance workshops, conferences, and activities; and establishment of alliances of alliances, formed by leaders in a common academic area. Contains brief descriptions of 24 existing Arkansas academic alliances. (SV)

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ACADEMIC ALLIANCES, YOU CAN DO IT TOO

The Arkansas Network of Humanities Academic Alliances is a collaborative, statewide network of school and college teachers in humanities disciplines who meet regularly to promote ongoing professional development and work toward common objectives. This network is housed on the campus of Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

Experience with academic alliances in Arkansas can assist others in developing and maintaining similar relationships. This experience is central to the you-can-do-it-too theme of this paper.

Project Objectives

The Arkansas Network of Humanities Academic Alliances (1) strengthens humanities teaching at all educational levels; (2) improves student learning in the humanities; (3) fosters lasting, local professional relationships between school and higher education faculty in the humanities; (4) provides ongoing support for established humanities alliances; and (5) assists the formation of emerging alliances.

Dr. Robert Steinmiller, Project Director, is housed at Henderson State University which provides administrative support, in-kind services in the form of an on-campus office, half-time clerical support and related administrative assistance. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education provides project advising and financial assistance.

Dr. Steinmiller facilitates development of local alliances by (1) conducting faculty surveys to build new alliances especially among under-represented or under-served populations; (2) organizing workshops, conferences, and inservice; (3) providing ongoing technical support to organized alliances, and (4) improving public awareness of humanities alliances through newsletters and public relations. Dr. Steinmiller disseminates information on humanities alliance activities to education policy-makers and to humanities scholars not yet involved in alliances. Contact is made with Chambers of Commerce, business and industry, and professional societies to promote humanities alliances in their local areas. Dr. Steinmiller attends professional meetings of humanities groups.

Audience Served by This Project

Current humanities alliances exist representing history, social studies, communications, English, reading, whole language, journalism, foreign language, geography, and all Arkansas school and college humanities faculty comprise the target audience for this project. Other beneficiaries of project activities include the students of alliance participants and their professional colleagues. An important product of alliance building is greater visibility for the humanities in the local community as business leaders, parents and public officials become aware of this collaboration.

Steps That Facilitate Alliance Formation

First initial interest needs to be stimulated. Seed money from grant's providers often have a goal to develop collaboration among educators on the school and collegiate levels. A presentation or paper such as this will also spark interest that promotes alliance formation. Environmental necessity requiring shared resources may stimulate further collaboration. The state network or established local alliances may reach out to regions in need of alliance benefits. Once initial interest is stimulated, more substantial support is sought.

An initial interest meeting is arranged. Potential alliance leaders and participants come together to set an interest meeting. Often, faculty lounge conversation or school faculty taking graduate credit on a university campus lead to linkage that seeks resources to bring potential alliance members together.

The Arkansas Network of Academic Alliances has as ap primary goal the support of these initial meetings. Interested faculty often contact the Network for assistance in preparing and executing this initial meeting. A location, time and tentative agenda are established. The goal is to begin the process that leads to independence of the future alliance.

The Network helps publicize this initial meeting. Local newspapers may print news releases. Local shcool districts may publicize and even host the meeting. Regional educational cooperatives are often quite helpful. Local universities and colleges often lend resources to the endeavor.

Financial support is available to bring in resource persons, pay for meeting expenses and help get the Alliance started. To receive assistance, the group must be willing to set up a steering committee composed of both school and college faculty, develop concrete goals and objectives, and agree to have additional meetings.

Resources For Assisting Local Alliances:

The Arkansas Network of Academic Alliance will support the alliance efforts to achieve its goals in the following ways:

1. Pay carpool mileage, reasonable meal expenses and substitute pay for at least one meeting per year. Proposed expenses must be cleared with the Network in writing and in advance. Support for additional meetings will depend on alliance goals and quality of activities.

2. The Network can defray postage and paper cost for sending out meeting notices. The Network will mail memos about meetings if provided with a master copy if the appropriate information at least two weeks in advance. Updates on mailings lists should be forwarded to the Network.

3. The Network will periodically produce and distribute a statewide alliance newsletter to keep the members posted on what is going on around the state. Alliances are encouraged to provide the Network with news about its plans and accomplishments; this is evidence that you are meeting objectives and will help the Network decide on continued support.

4. The Network will keep alliances posted on projects around the nation. If the alliance is interested in pursuing some major goal such as restructuring, the network helps planning to that end.

Initial Meetings

At the initial meeting, personal data sheets are filled out. Information regarding areas of interest and willingness to be involved are expressed. Communication is a key to networking and the information on this sheet facilitates linkage. Work address, phone, and office hours are identified. Usually, participants provide home address, phone and times available as well. This home information is helpful if work communications prove to be inefficient.

A clear sense of purpose, direction and leadership must be nurtured at the initial meeting. The Network leader or local emergent leader must guide the alliance to identify projects and purpose. This initial direction is flexible but must be clarified.

A steering committee is essential. School and college faculty must be represented. One contact person must be identified. This contact person is the conduit through whom the state coordinator can reach the full alliance.

Most importantly, a champion or set of champions and support institutions must provide the energy, effort and interest to initiate, form, and continue academic alliances.

Continued Alliance Workshops and Conferences

Each alliance holds meetings that are of professional benefit to each participant. Alliances set a calendar that includes meetings, goals and objectives: some meet three or more times a year. Some alliance activities are as follows:

1. Teachers share curriculum ideas with copies of lessons for each alliance member. Guest speakers are brought in to discuss a theme.

2. Alliances take part in cultural events. The South Arkansas Foreign Language Alliance conducted a foreign language festival for high school students. West Arkansas Foreign Language Alliance provided ethnic dances for a leaders meeting.

3. Newsletters and minutes of meetings are generated to communicate to all members.

4. Leaders from one area of the state visit other alliances in other parts of the state.

5. Alliances assist in maintaining membership information in the Arkansas Network of Academic Alliances data base at Henderson State University. This database of 2724 names serves as the distribution list for an alliances newsletter as well as individual alliance meeting announcements. Alliances are encourage to maintain this data in local files as well.

6. Alliances assist in the publication and distribution of an alliance newsletter that communicates with alliance members and potential participants.

7. Alliances participate in statewide grand alliance meetings that brings professionals together from across the state.

8. Leaders meetings are conducted to develop skills to assist the alliances in effectiveness and efficiency.

Leader's Alliances

One of the most important phases of the alliance movement has been the establishment of alliances of alliances. Leaders from alliances in a common academic area such as communications, foreign language, language arts, reading and social studies have formed into alliances that meet to disseminate information to their alliances. The leaders alliances help acquire resources for the alliances, and are designed to carry the alliance movement back to the grassroots level. Dependence on the Network as a whole for resources is reduced. Continuation of the alliance movement is hopefully ensured by the leaders alliances carrying on the work of maintaining the alliances in their interest areas.

Review of Existing Alliances

LANGUILLA AREA LANGUAGE ALLIANCE (LALA): French, Spanish, and Japanese faculty from Forrest City High School, East Arkansas Community College, and schools in Crittenden, West Memphis, Lee, Monroe, Phillips, and St. Francis counties are supported by the Great Rivers Educational Cooperative.

SOUTH ARKANSAS FOREIGN LANGUAGE ALLIANCE (SAFLA): This model academic alliance often meets in members' homes sharing potluck foreign dishes and recipes. They host a foreign language festival.

WEST ARKANSAS FOREIGN LANGUAGE ALLIANCE (WAFLA): This alliance supported by Westark Community College serves French, German, Latin, and Spanish faculty.

ARKANSANS FOR WHOLE LANGUAGE - STUTTGART: Three elementary schools work with University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University of Central Arkansas and University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

ALLIANCE OF COMMUNICATION EDUCATORS (ACE): The Arkansas Communication Association is a leaders alliance to address curriculum concerns. Specific curriculum suggestions were presented to the Arkansas Department of Education. A survey of 1443 communication educators in October 1993 gave the leaders alliance specific direction.

COSSATOT WHOLE LANGUAGE ALLIANCE (CWLA): The De-Queen Mena Educational Cooperative, Henderson State University and Southern Arkansas University faculty work with language teachers.

CENTRAL ARKANSAS ALLIANCE FOR WHOLE LITERACY (CAWLA): Faculty from Little Rock Public Schools and The University of Arkansas at Little Rock plan goals, time lines, and philosophy on a yearly basis.

CREATIVE LEARNING (CL): Nevada Elementary working with Southern Arkansas University, Henderson faculty, Hope Educational Cooperative staff and local schools in Hempstead and Nevada counties has conducted a grants workshop and a number of curriculum sharing meetings.

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS WHOLE LANGUAGE ALLIANCE (NAWLA): This large alliance in Springdale Arkansas had 140 persons its initial meeting. University of Arkansas Fayetteville and Happy Hollow School faculty provide direction.

MONTECELLO JOURNALISM ALLIANCE (MJA): The University of Arkansas at Montecello works with local school journalism faculty.

WESTARK LANGUAGE ARTS ALLIANCE (WALA): This alliance developed a newsletter Motivate for the alliance members.

WESTARK JOURNALISM ALLIANCE: This alliance focuses on mass media topics.

WEST ARKANSAS SPEECH ALLIANCE: Speech teachers from Fort Smith Northside High School, Southside High School and Westark Community College work together to explore issues regarding school debate, speech and theatre.

ALLIANCE FOR THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS (AVPA): Faculty from the DeQueen-Mena Educational Cooperative service area believe that the visual and performing arts are important teaching aids in academic subject areas.

BRADFORD ART ALLIANCE: Bradford High School faculty formed this art interest alliance.

EL DORADO MUSIC ALLIANCE: Faculty from South Arkansas Community College, Barton Middle school, Arkansas High School, Texarkana Community College, Magnolia High School, Fairview High School and Southern Arkansas University promote music education.

ARKANSAS GEOGRAPHIC ALLIANCE: The Arkansas Geographic Alliance is a model for other alliances. Its summer institutes are popular. The alliance hosts a geography essay contest for fifth through seventh grade students, as well as a National Geographic Awareness Week.

ARKANSAS LEADERS ALLIANCE IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES:(ALASS) This leaders group is an umbrella for social studies teachers to review curriculum revision and make suggestions to the Arkansas Department of Education.

MIDDLE LEVEL INTERDISCIPLINARY ALLIANCE (MLIA): A number of University faculty across the disciplines including math and science work with middle school faculty.

MILLS ALLIANCE FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (MASS): Harding University and the Wilber Mills Educational Cooperative support this alliance including social studies faculty and administrators from ASU/Beebe, Harding University, Harding Academy and public schools.

SOUTH ARKANSAS SOCIAL SCIENCE ALLIANCE (SASSA): The Southern Center for International Studies, Dawson Educational Cooperative, Ouachita Baptist University and Henderson State University worked with this alliance to host a major conference on the Soviet Union.

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS HISTORY TEACHING ALLIANCE (SEAHTA): The University of Arkansas at Montecello is a model alliance hosting leadership trips to West Africa, Egypt, Israel, as well as significant historical sites in Arkansas.

SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS SOCIAL STUDIES ALLIANCE (SWASSA): Southern Arkansas University works closely with the Arkansas Historical Restoration and other social studies agencies with teachers.

WOODWARD INSTITUTE ALLIANCE: This alliance developed out of a C. Vann Woodward Summer Institute at Henderson State University.